

Ralph J. Bunch Legacy: Minority Officers

AMBASSADOR WILLIAM BEVERLY CARTER, JR.

Interviewed by: Celestine Tutt

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Q: This is an oral history interview with Ambassador William Beverly Carter, Jr., retired Ambassador-at-Large, United States Department of State. Ambassador Carter also served as United States Ambassador to Tanzania from June 1972 to December 1975, and Liberia from April 1976 to January 1979. He holds the distinction of having been the first black United States Ambassador to Tanzania and our first black Ambassador-at-Large. This interview is being sponsored by the Phelps-Stokes Fund as part of an oral history project on Black Chiefs of Mission. The interview is a first in a series. It is being held Thursday, April 30, 1981 at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, New York City. Celestine Tutt, interviewer.

Ambassador Carter, could we begin by your telling us about the events which led to your entry into the diplomatic service?

CARTER: Well, this is not a classic entry into the Service. I have come, as you know, from a background in journalism, and one of the persons I came to know fairly well as a journalist was my colleague, Carl Rowan. And Carl had just come back from Finland where he had been ambassador and was asked to serve as the director of the then United States Information Agency, by President Johnson. In the course of Carl's assignment in that job, he made the point to President Johnson that there had not been a good representation of all Americans; all Americans being blacks, women, Hispanics, etc. in the Foreign Service and he felt that the Service would be improved by that introduction. And so President Johnson said, "Carl, okay, go out and find some people that you think would be candidates for that kind of participation in the Foreign Service." I was one of several people apparently queried by Carl for a short list of names of candidates, and one of Carl's assistants at the time was a young man who was an old friend of mine also, whose name is Dennis Askey. Dennis Askey is now a retired United States Information Service Officer. And so I gave them a short list of five names and I, as I said, I'm certain others did and a number of us ... this was now in the period 1963-1964.

A number of blacks particularly who came to mind were people who had in the course of the Second World War, and in later years, had some association with organizations described by Senator McCarthy as being less than pure and clean and not ultra-conservative. Others had health problems; others had financial problems; and for one reason or another, each short list turned up no names.

And, finally, in the course of some of the Cabinet meetings which Carl attended, President Johnson asked for reports. Carl could not give him the kind of response, the affirmative response he wanted and Carl called me one day and said, "Look Bev, would you be willing to have your name placed in consideration for...ah...ah...one of these slots in the Foreign Service?" I said, "What are you talking about?" And he said, "Well, we're looking for a Public Affairs Officer in Ethiopia and one in Nairobi. Do you think you can take a leave of absence from your newspaper as the publisher of the Pittsburgh Courier?" I said, "I don't think I can. For one, I don't think my board will let me do it, and two, I've got a son who's getting ready to go to college and I'm not sure I can afford it.

But to make a long story short, we talked back and forth and I finally agreed to take a two-year leave - my board gave it to me - and I went to Nairobi as our Information Officer. And three months after going there as Information Officer, I was asked to become Public Affairs Officer, which in effect is the Director of the Information Service Program, in Kenya. And that led to other assignments, and other assignments, and other assignments. And finally my board said, "You either come back or not." And I found I was enjoying my work. I had by that time taken the Foreign Service examination; I passed it and decided to make the Foreign Service my career.

Q: And exactly how did you move into the position of Ambassador for Tanzania?

CARTER: (1augh)s...Well, I think I did a pretty good job in Kenya at a time just following their independence, and based on that job, I was asked to go to Nigeria as Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs. And at that time, you may recall, Nigeria was involved or about to become involved in a civil war. I got there a year before the Biafran Civil War. And I got there in the summer of '66, and in April 1977, Biafra, the Eastern region, attempted to secede from the Federation of Nigeria.

Our embassy was very active in trying to keep the Federation together when the secession in fact began. There were a number of people in Washington and in the press, politicians who sided with the Biafran Ibos and our embassy found itself in the position of trying to have to explain why we were supportive of the Federal Military Government and not supportive of the break away section of Nigeria.

Ambassador Elbert Mathews, who's now deceased, decided that I would be a person who could best explain that situation in Washington and to the many politicians and newsmen who were coming out, and so I was both spokesman for the embassy and also did a shuttling job between Lagos and Washington, made a number of appearances on the Hill. And very candidly got the kind of exposure which brought me before the attention of a number of people. And I guess I did that job fairly well.

Then in 1969, toward the end of 1969, when the new Assistant Secretary of State was named, David Newsom, he had observed my work and he asked me if I would come to work for him as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. David had had prior experience in the Middle East and in North Africa but had had no experience in Africa south of the Sahara. I had both in terms of my Foreign Service career and also when I was a newspaperman. I guess I did not say that, as a newspaperman, one of my geographical areas of interest was Africa. And so I went to Africa for the first time in 1952 when there were just five of the countries that were independent, and I began to write then about the winds of change in British colonial West Africa, using Liberia and the Gold Coast as points of reference.

So with that kind of background, Newsom asked me to come on as Deputy Assistant Secretary with him, which I did and enjoyed thoroughly, and I think we made a very good team.

And we particularly worked on southern African issues. Dave and I made a trip to South Africa together and I helped to change some of our policies, both in dealing with South Africa on a government-to-government basis, and also in terms of policy changes within our own government about assignments of officers. We got our first black American officer assigned to one of our installations there; it was the purpose for our visit. We were able to get black South Africans upgraded in positions that other nationals held in the Embassy and consulates. So with that kind of background ... for three years ... and also having arranged for a ten-nation tour of Africa by Secretary William Rogers, which was at that point in time the first time an American Secretary of State had ever visited Africa, it became fairly clear to the people in the (State) Department that I had some African experience, some African contacts, some African know-how. And Bill Rogers, whom I regarded as one of our very finest Secretaries of State, and David Newsom, said that they would like me to go to Tanzania when that Embassy became vacant, because Tanzania was on the cutting edge of our southern African situation with so many things happening in southern Africa. And I was asked to go, and I was confirmed by the Senate. And we left in June of 1972.

Q: I want to ask about your first impressions of Tanzania, but before you do, you said that you did a number of things to try to keep the Federation together.

CARTER: In Nigeria?

Q: Yes. Could you talk about some of those things you did?

CARTER: Well, I think primarily in trying to maintain a dialogue between the leadership of the people who were responsible for leading both sections of that Federation at the time. Ojukwu, who you recall, was the Governor of the Eastern Region. At that time Nigeria was divided into four states instead of the nineteen that now exist there. Ojukwu was a very, very popular, very dynamic, very charismatic leader. And Jack Gowon who was the leader of the rest of the country did not begin to have the sort of charisma and political savvy that Ojukwu had. And I think we just tried to backstop him and his colleagues so that they would feel that they could better serve the Federation by trying to accommodate Ojukwu and keep him in the Federation. We did not realize at that time that there were so many forces outside of Nigeria that were in fact pushing Ojukwu to secede. For instance, the French connection. The Rothschild banking people were financing the secession on the basis of what had become known then as early, early affirmative seismographic discoveries of oil off the Bonny, Calabar and Port Harcourt region of the coast, which region at that time was in the Eastern part of Nigeria. We tried to keep some of the ... Americans who were so enamored with the Eastern Region. We had our largest Peace Corps contingent in the Eastern Region and they were very much spokesmen for trying to tell the U. S. that we should support the Eastern Region and encourage them in their secession. And then the Catholic Church was very strong in the Eastern Region as against the Muslims from the North, and Protestants in the remainder of the country. So, it was a matter of trying to work with these segments of public opinion in trying to keep focusing on the need for the Federation staying together, using, of course, our own illustration of how much stronger we were as a nation as a consequence of the South and the North remaining, or coming back together after our Civil War. And, I had, I guess at that point in time the best access to most of the leadership throughout the country, because one of my first assignments as Minister-Counselor was the supervisory responsibility for all of our USIS offices throughout the country. So I traveled into Enugu, into Port Harcourt, Kaduna and Kano, and Ibadan, as well as working out of Lagos. So I was making a full tour of the Federation and therefore I got to know most of the leaders and most had confidence in me, and so I could talk to them sometimes when they weren't talking to each other.

Q: I see. Shall we move on to Tanzania?

CARTER: Yes.

Q: What were your first impressions of Tanzania?

CARTER: Well, I had known it because when I served in Kenya, I used to go down to ... the best game parks in East Africa were in Tanzania. And Julius Nyerere was, of course, also one of the early heroes, political heroes, of mine and of many other Africanists. And so I looked forward very much to the, to the challenge - the intellectual challenge of working with him and with his Government, albeit that some of his economic, political philosophies were somewhat different from those that I had come to know.

But Tanzania is a huge country, very diverse; mountains and with tropical coastline; with over two hundred tribes, but with no tribe being so large that it was a dominant tribe as you had and as you have, for instance, in Kenya where you have the Kikuyu and the Luo, who are the two dominant tribes. And then, as a consequence, there is a great deal of vying between the two. Julius Nyerere, for instance, comes from the very smallest of tribes in Tanzania: about 6,000 people. So you know that he has become leader because of the confidence that the people have in him rather than the fact he simply has more of a constituency than someone else has.

But Tanzania is also a poor country - without many of the resources that Nigeria had in rubber and oil and timber; and, without a large infrastructure such as Kenya had from the tourist industry. And yet it also was a headquarters at that time of most of the liberation movements in Africa. The insurgencies that were developing and coming to fruition in Mozambique and Angola, and now in Zimbabwe, were all headquartered in Dar es Salaam. The capital was the beehive of revolution and liberation, and that was both an opportunity and also a difficulty. Because at that point in time, one of our major NATO allies was Portugal, and the Portuguese did not want us to develop relations with insurgents who were attempting to dispossess them in Angola and Mozambique. So it presented a very delicate political balance.

I'm saying all of this in terms of responding to your question on my impressions, because all of these contributed to the impression that I had, what I was going to. I knew I wasn't going to an easy task (laughs).

Q: How would you describe U. S. policy towards Tanzania at that time?

CARTER: Very ambivalent. We, as I said, had this difficulty with Tanzania because it was encouraging a liberation movement by simply giving them a place to ... from which to develop their organization and spread the propaganda.

The Cubans were active in Tanzania; the doyen of the diplomatic corps was a Cuban. Nyerere was an admitted, an avowed and a practicing and proselytizing socialist. We weren't sure what we wanted to do about Tanzania ... we, the United States Government. At that particular time the United States Government was headed by a Republican Administration which added to this, which compounded this problem of confusion. Because while Julius Nyerere was an extremely popular person personally, what he espoused and what his country stood for was just difficult for orthodox and Republican conservatism, and so we did not have a very clearly defined policy.

At the same time, we didn't have a fair policy. Many other countries regarded Tanzania as one of the most important of the developing countries in the world, for instance, the Scandinavian countries. Scandinavian countries - Sweden, for instance, Sweden's largest economic assistance packages were sent to Tanzania and to India. Great Britain was very supportive economically of Tanzania. So many people that we knew and respected and had associations with - political associations with - regarded Tanzania highly. We just at that point in time had, as I say, great ambivalence about what we should be doing. I suspect that ambivalence has not been altogether cleared since then, either, unfortunately.

Q: How did that compare with U.S. policy towards Africa in general, would you say?

CARTER: Well, I think that represented a part of the dilemma we had toward Africa. I think that the Tanzanian example most clearly described the horns of the dilemma we found ourselves on in Africa. There were certain countries like Zaire and Liberia and Kenya where we felt more comfortable, and Ethiopia, even at that time, before the revolution. But those countries where we felt more comfortable were in the minority. Tanzania, Ghana, Zambia, caused us problems, because not only did they do things differently, but they were also in the vanguard of other progressives. They were the bellwether for other progressive African countries. So those countries tended to look to Tanzania for leadership, and Nyerere was never hesitant about offering it and giving it and doing it well.

Q: What were some of the kinds of problems you just referred to?

CARTER: Well, I think in fact that Tanzania was supportive of change in southern Africa, in Southern Rhodesia, in Mozambique, in Angola. They kept making us face up to the contradiction of our saying we, I think the phrase is, "abhor apartheid," but we don't do a Goddamn thing about it. And the Tanzanians kept our feet to the fire on that, both in the Security Council and in the General Assembly, and in our bilateral relations. And so there were no really material things to which one could refer, but there were on the world stage of public opinion. It was just that Tanzania was making it difficult for us.

Q: Could you talk a little about the relations between Tanzania and neighboring Burundi?

CARTER: I could talk a little about it. Tanzania, Nyerere himself, was very embarrassed about the massacres, about tribalicide that was taking place in Burundi. Tanzania also suffered very much from the refugees who were leaving Burundi because of not only persecution but also because of the slaying of thousands and thousands of Burundis. But Burundi was a very ... is a very small country. I don't mean to denigrate it because of its size, but the major problem was one of the refugee problem and the one of genocide and tribal conflict. And Nyerere was never a person to turn his back on bad things that other blacks did to other blacks. He did not only point the finger at whites who were exploitive and destructive of blacks, he would also call a spade a spade, as he did in the Burundi case as well as in Uganda, where he ultimately had to do something which I know very much went against his grain and that was to mount a force to go in to overthrow Amin. But Nyerere is probably one of the most principled men I ever met in my life. When I say principled, I mean doing things he regards as being right and which, generally speaking, are right by other, by humanitarian, standards.

Q: Could you cite some other concrete examples of it?

CARTER: Well, I would say that probably he felt very uncomfortable with General Mobutu in Zaire, because I don't think he felt that Mobutu represented the finest in leadership in that huge country. I think he felt that Mobutu permitted an exploitation and corruption with which Nyerere had difficulty. I think he looked at Kenya as being the worst of what people talk about when they talk about the excesses of capitalism, and that the capitalist sources were in the hands of a few, and that the people in Kenya did not ... the people, the masses of people in Kenya did not ... the standard of living did not go across the board. It was maintained by a few of the Kikuyu elite.

And I'm not a practicing socialist, but I think that an effective capital experience can spread riches up and down the line. I think Nyerere really felt that he didn't see that in Kenya and he didn't see that in Zaire, and he said that. And it's one of the reasons why I think that he and Kenyatta were never the fastest of friends, though Nyerere respected what Kenyatta had done during the fight for independence. But then I think he felt that he became satisfied too quickly with too little for the people of Kenya.

Q: What kinds of problems, if any, did you face, particular problems you faced as Ambassador to Tanzania?

CARTER: Well, there are several. I think the first one was with my own country. If an ambassador attempts to, with objectivity, talk about the country into which he is assigned, he runs two risks: one of either being identified as being extremely perceptive and a bright guy who'd really gotten to know the picture well, or having been overcome with what we call provincialism, having become an ambassador for that country back to your own country rather than the reverse.

I talked earlier about my Government's ambivalence about Tanzania. I don't think I made them any more comfortable about this because I described in almost all of my reporting what I saw and the way I analyzed it, and that was not necessarily always what my Government wanted to hear. I thought that Nyerere should have been treated more like the world leader that he is and that everyone recognized him to be. But you could not even discuss the possibility of a State visit by Nyerere to the United States in 1972, 1973, 1974, because to have done that would have labeled you as being a complete softy or that you'd been taken over by the man and that sort of thing. When in point of fact, Nyerere had not even been in America since President Kennedy had invited him in 1961, I think. Just unheard of for a man of his... Nyerere's worldwide leadership being treated, I felt, as, not as well as other people who didn't come nearly up to his size. It's sort of symptomatic of the problem I had in dealing with my own Government.

And, of course, I suspect the second problem, and perhaps the one that was most difficult, involved the policy we had about American diplomats not having any association with the insurgent leaders, the liberation leaders like Samora Michel, who became the President of Mozambique and Agostinho Neto, who became eventually the President of Angola, and Joshua Nkomo, and the others from Zimbabwe. We were prohibited from having any association with them, and that didn't cause problems with my colleagues in Nouakchott or in Rabat or in Cairo or some other places because the leaders weren't headquartered there, but they were in Dar es Salaam and so I was... everything I went to, or almost everything I went to, there would be someone from Frelimo or the MPLA or from one or the other, or from ANC, African National Congress, who'd be there. Not only was I the American Ambassador, but I was also, I think, without attempting to suggest any arrogance on my part, I was also very well liked in Tanzania. I think my blackness did not hurt me. It was known that I'd been active in the civil rights movement before I came into the Foreign Service. I had a track record which people knew. They knew that I had certain attitudes because I was a sincere student of African Affairs and had been for a number of years. And so, I had access and entree. And I was never then, nor would I now, buckle under to instructions to a point where I would, say, if I went into a room and there was the Cuban Ambassador and Samora Michel, ignore them (laughs). Well, I'm just not going to do that (laughs again).

Well, I was there somewhat vindicated because... And this attitude, see, stemmed from our association with the Portuguese and the Portuguese had the same kind of lobby in Washington that the South Africans and the Rhodesians have and some other groups have. They had certain senators, certain congressmen that they knew well. They had access and entree to the NSC, the National Security Council. And I can tell you that if I, in fact, saw someone, it was pretty much known as quickly back in Washington because of these other sources as from my own reporting it. Because I made it always a point of saying that I had done this so that no one would say that I was trying to do it sub rosa. Well, this put me in a kind of a special ... made me an enigma (laughs) and I didn't, frankly, give a damn. I thought I had a job to do and one of the jobs I had to was to know the country of my assignment and know what was going on in it, so therefore I didn't tend to stay on one side of the street. That was the second problem.

Third problem, of course, is the one which gained much more notoriety, and that was my involvement in the case of the four Stanford University students who were kidnapped while I was there and with a release, safe release I was able to have some responsibility in negotiating. And at that time we had a policy that we did not negotiate with terrorists. That policy conflicted with another policy which said, one of the first things you do faced with Americans who are in jeopardy is to ascertain their health and well being. So I had to juggle the concern that we have for the health and well being and safety of our citizens with another policy which said you can't do anything about trying to, to rescue them and to save them. I was eventually sacked as a consequence of my action. I was assigned to Copenhagen and that assignment was cancelled as a consequence of my behavior in that situation. But fortunately a better informed leadership in Washington and certainly the press, almost to a man, or to a publication, and most politicians in Washington recognized what I was trying to do and I was, I guess you might call, rehabilitated and eventually given another assignment. But mine has not been the kind of routine, pedestrian ambassadorial responsibility (laughs).

Q: Could you give us the full story of that Stanford incident, please?

CARTER: Well, I don't know the full story. I suppose when I say... Well, let me think about it, what I could talk about it. The reason I hesitate is that there are some aspects of it over which I have no responsibility, which involved the United States Government and which I would have to respect the security aspects of it.

Q : Of course.

CARTER: But, it essentially was that Stanford University operated a primate study station in Gombe, G-O-M-B-E, just off Lake Tanganyika and that station was headed by a gal by the name of Jane Goodall. And on the other side of the lake, for a territory about roughly the size of New Jersey, there was a group of, and it still exists, a dissident group in Zaire that opposes Mobutu and they, one night in May of 1975, came across the lake and kidnapped four of the students, took them back across the lake. And they did this essentially to gain publicity for their movement, and gain arms and ammunition to help in their fight against Mobutu.

Their original request for publicity of money and arms and ammunition was addressed to the Tanzanian Government. The Tanzanian Government was obviously not in a position to be responsive, or not so obviously, they didn't ... they were not going to be responsive. Because the students were Americans, we obviously were much concerned and the first thing we are obliged to do in our book of instructions on how to deal with a situation like this is to find out whether the people are alive and well and what can be done to get them out of that dilemma. The dissident group gave 60 days, I think, in which to ... or gave a declaration of 60 days in which these things were supposed to be done, thirty days passed and we were not able to establish any communication with the dissident group about the Americans. And we were using every device in our power, including sending messages by missionaries, or using the Voice of America, BBC, and other international radio networks. And then we became ... and meanwhile several of the parents of these kids had come out. The University sent its own representative and newsmen began to come into the country obviously because at that time it was a big story.

One day two of the representatives of the dissident movement got on a train and came down from Kigoma, one of the major towns on the lake. Came down on the train from the town on the lake to Dar and walked into our Embassy and had letters from the remaining detainees. One of the detainees had been released first, at the end of the first week. She was released so she could bring the (initial) information about what they (the kidnappers) wanted and then we heard nothing more, until a month later. And while I was, while we were at home having lunch one day with the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, whose name was Nathaniel Davis and who was much concerned about how this was progressing. Again, because of a great deal of Congressional interest and general interest. He was visiting our country and leaving Tanzania that afternoon to go to Kenya (when these fellows walked in).

And while we were having lunch, my deputy phoned me, or my secretary phoned me, yes, my secretary phoned me from the Embassy to say that two men who were French-speaking had come to see me and that they said that they represented the PRP - People's Revolutionary Party - and that they had information about the kidnapped students and they were there waiting to talk to me. I asked to speak to my deputy, who speaks some French, and I asked him to get the administrative officer who had served in Zaire and for them to have a quick chat and attempt to verify the credentials ...their credentials, and to see that they were bona fide. And he came back on the phone about five minutes later and said yes, it appeared that they were bona fide representatives, that they not only seemed to be what they said they were, but they also had letters from several of the students, and that one of the parents had been sent for to see if that parent could identify the handwriting of the student.

I then relayed this information to my colleague who was the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. He was elated that we had finally made some contact with the dissidents that we'd been wanting all this time, and it appeared that the three kids were okay. And I said, "Well, Nat, shall we go down and conduct interviews?" He said, no, you're on top of this, go right ahead and see what you can learn, and send me a cable to Nairobi to keep me informed.

That was the first of a whole series of, first, discussions and then negotiations. And in the negotiations we said what we could not do: The United States Government could not, one, provide arms and ammunition; it could not pay money; and it could not carry on The Voice of America any publicity that they wanted us to carry on, but that obviously there were a lot of newsmen in town who were following this and they would certainly be available to even talk to anyone they wanted to on their own, but that we could not have anything to do with it.

The negotiations went on, I suppose, what, for ten days, two weeks in Dar. We went out to the lake for a couple of meetings. One of the parents got involved on the ransom side of it, again, outside of our U.S. Government activity, and completely outside of my involvement and the Embassy's involvement. But again in all honesty, a sum of money was paid, and I'm not trying to extricate myself from any responsibility about this. I'm telling you as it is. I had nothing to do with the ransom or the transmission of the ransom, or the paying of it or anything else. It was done with the knowledge and complicity of others. I don't think that that was necessarily the whole quid. I'm pretty certain it was not the whole quid, but it was ultimately released that, in fact that happened. Meanwhile there were a number of starts and stops in terms of getting ... there were three girls and one fellow. Barbara Smuts, one girl had been released within one week. We got two girls released later and then the final lad was released in August and that was a very James Bond kind of episode experience again which I can't really talk too much about. Nonetheless, he was gotten out of Zaire across the lake.

Now, in the course of all of this, there were telephone calls and telegrams being sent, not weekly or daily, but three and four, and five times a day, through the night, because of the time change. At four o'clock in the morning I was reading telegrams and sending telegrams just as I would be doing in the morning at ten or twelve o'clock because that's when the State Department was functioning. No one in the State Department was unaware of anything that we were ... everyone in the State Department was aware of everything we were doing. And we had approval up to and including the Undersecretary of Political Affairs, Joseph Sisco.

One of the things that was critical in this whole episode about which not only were we not informed in Tanzania, but most people in Washington were not informed, was that Secretary Kissinger and President Mobutu were going through an exercise regarding adventure with UNITA and Jonas Savimbi in Angola. And you recall that what we had proposed to do with support of Savimbi in Angola was what led to the Clark Amendment, which now prohibits the U.S. from interfering in, particularly in Angola, or specifically in Angola, because there had come to power MPLA headed by Agostinho Neto. But he was a socialist; he's now dead. And we were ... Henry Kissinger was interested in giving support to Savimbi and he was using Mobutu as his contact person with Savimbi. Zaire and Mobutu were going to be the conduit to Savimbi in Angola.

Now, Mobutu is very sensitive about any dissident movement in his country. He said to the Secretary of State that the American Ambassador ...in Tanzania ... was not only unfriendly but that I was negotiating with the People's Revolutionary Party, which was the party that had kidnapped these four students, and that I had met with them and that I was encouraging them. And since no one knew of Kissinger's conversations with Mobutu or about the Savimbi connection, they did not understand why Kissinger was so disturbed that we were making life difficult for him on one side when he was trying to make it go so well for himself on the other side. I was making Mobutu unhappy because it was alleged that I was doing business with this dissident movement. So Kissinger said to Mobutu, apparently, that he would show this was not only against U.S. Government policy, but that he would have this Ambassador put on the raft.

And so that's when I was ... told that my assignment - remember I mentioned about this luncheon when we got the phone call, about these two fellows walking into my Embassy? At that luncheon the Assistant Secretary had come to tell me that the nomination had been put forward, my assignment had been requested of the Danish Government but that the (State) Department would like me to stay in Dar es Salaam until the kidnapping (situation) was completed so it would not appear that I was leaving in the midst of this thing, while we were making arrangements about my forward assignment on to Copenhagen.

So the reason that I eventually got a rapping on the wrist was because I was interfering with one of Secretary Kissinger's plans which no one else knew about. Well, it turns out that there ... that I was called back in, I guess, August of '75, and everyone assumed I was being called back to be congratulated and applauded and all that stuff after everybody got out. And that's when I got the word that I was not being applauded but was given my marching orders. But Larry [Eagleburger], who was Kissinger's special deputy, was very friendly and very supportive and attempted to put all this in perspective for the Secretary and I think was as responsible as any one person in the Department for, for as I said, for my rehabilitation in a matter of months and getting another assignment. It turns out that Monrovia, the Monrovia Embassy is a much larger embassy than our Copenhagen Embassy and has much bigger responsibility, and I enjoyed it thoroughly. But, in any event, that is as much of the story as I think I can tell right now because so many of the players are still alive.

I think also in just, in sort of completing the story and giving credit to people who were helpful, it would be unfair not to mention the leadership that the Black (Congressional) Caucus took in this whole episode. They seized it; they met with the Secretary about it; and they did not let the issue die. They talked to the members of the press and to other people on the Hill. There was just a tremendous amount of public support, public and political support. I would guess that it would be a great mistake to try to identify everyone. My wife most certainly was at the focal point of this, because she was back here kind of controlling all the things that were happening. David Hamburg, who was the Stanford University representative in Tanzania at that time, did yeoman work in trying to contact people and put the story ... cast the story more correctly.

One of the parents of one of the students was a vice president of a major motorcar company and had resources available (laughs). So there are a lot of people who were helpful and. ..I... it's one of the things that I have done in my career, Foreign Service career, that I am ... I don't want to say proudest of - but I have better feelings about - than almost anything else I can really cite, because what else have you to remember but what you may have done maybe in saving someone's life? And it was that kind of -those were the kinds of issues involved.

Q: Shall we move on to Liberia?

CARTER: Liberia? Yes.

Q: Tell us about the years in Liberia.

CARTER: (laughs) Well, Liberia is very different country from Tanzania, not as large in geography, not as large in population, but where I did not have to start off trying to explain it to my own Government, because my own Government knew Liberia well, had some conceptions of it that I thought needed updating, and of course, the American public had some perceptions of it which continually need updating.

Liberia has probably suffered from the poorest press of any country on that continent, and I think, now, not for the right reasons. It is a country where there's a great deal of American involvement and interest, but a country which had a higher standard of living than many African countries; where the older regime was attempting to involve all of the people in the economy and in the political process; where it was beginning to do that.

If I were going to jump quickly and respond to the question, well then why, if that was so, was there this coup? I would say that I think it's because revolutions occur as people begin to realize that they're making progress. Revolutions never occur when people are completely downtrodden, prostrate and have nothing. The French Revolution is the classic illustration of that and I think Liberia is not as dramatic an illustration but certainly one of the more recent ones.

Almost all Liberians were involved in the cash economy. There are very few African countries where that could be said. I told you that I went to Africa initially in 1952, when I went to Liberia in 1952 it was a place I decided I never wanted to go back to again because it was a very depressing place, depressing country. There was poverty, in terms of customs and exploitation, but I saw, as many Africans say, "with my own eyes" the kinds of changes that have taken place. Not just in road buildings, schools, and hospitals, and clinics and things, but in terms of, of the so-called, and I use this phrase very advisedly when I say "the so-called," the so-called emergence of the countryman in the affairs of the country.

Everyone now talks again about the so-called Americo-Liberian. When I was there that was a no-no. People didn't talk about Americo-Liberians. Western journalists talked about it but Liberians didn't talk about it. The people who went to ... who came back to Liberia were exquisite colonialists like the Portuguese. They became a part of the people and so there were very, very few families that could ever talk about even being completely country families or completely former American families because of the mixture. Every family had its involvement, its cross-fertilization, if you please. And when I was there in '52 the first so-called countryman had just become a member of the Cabinet and everyone sort of reveled in that. And when I was back there again for Tubman's funeral, in 1971, I guess half the Cabinet was made up of people who could say that they were largely country people. By the time I was back there as Ambassador, there were two or three who could say that they were more Americo-Liberian and less country, and a majority were "country people."

But the level of expectation was continuing to rise. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction with the speed of change and I predicted, in my own estimate, that ... that ... that there would be a change. But I thought then there'd be a constitutional change. Tolbert was supposed to leave office in '83. He had himself recommended in the legislation a limit of eight years on the presidency and his eight years would have expired in '83. He made it very clear, I thought, certainly to my satisfaction anyway, but I wasn't the one who made the final decision on this, that he was not going to stand for re-election and I thought that there would be a constitutional change and there'd be more progress as a consequence of this change. Because it's very difficult for a man his age, and to have seen what he saw, not to believe that he wasn't doing a lot for the country. He was doing a lot for the country; it just wasn't fast enough and enough in terms of quantity.

But the Liberians as with Ghanaians and with the Nigerians were far more developed than many of the East Africans because the impact of the West had been longer on them. The West African coast, as you know, has been much traveled for many, many centuries and certainly since the 15th Century, extensively. When you have that kind of exposure, you have a great deal more development than you do in some other places. So Liberia is a very ... it's very much more developed in many ways than Tanzania and ... but the problem there was not in the vanguard of those nations that were fighting for dramatic change from the past. Tolbert used to receive Nujoma, Sam Nujoma from Namibia, and he and Sekou Toure got on very well together, but you don't ... you didn't think of Tolbert as being ... a Kenneth Kaunda or Julius Nyerere. He didn't have that capability, was not an intellectual giant. He did not even have quite the quality that Botswana's Seretse Khama had, who was not a giant intellectually the way I think Nkrumah was or Nyerere is, but nonetheless, you know he was a man with the South Africans surrounding him and almost controlling completely the economy of that country but yet having the courage to have a truly multiracial society and trying to make for change, providing opportunities for South African refugees - blacks - to come through on the way north kind of like the underground railroad. So Tolbert had an image problem which many of the African leaders did not have. But ... and he was not charismatic, and, so he was, I think, in many ways, his own worst enemy. But he was a man who was trying to do good.

Q: What were ... he was a man trying to do good... so I would consider it one of his great strengths.

CARTER: Uhm.

Q: Can you think of others?

CARTER: I think that's primarily where he ... where one would have to place their need. He was very active in the church. He was at one time you know president of the World Baptist Alliance. I think that was also a part of his problem, his image problem. He was, he was perceived as a man trying to do good but doing a lot of traveling, looking at problems that were worldwide sometimes rather than problems that were in Monrovia or in and around the villages of Liberia and some of the places that needed attention.

I think he also, unfortunately, had made a considerable amount of money over his lifetime because he was a businessman. And sometimes the appearance of ... of ... of your affluence can be a negative. There are many African leaders who have done just as well as he has done, but they haven't done it quite so overtly as he did. He had one of the biggest rice farms, rice plantations and (inaudible). He was a partner in Mesurado, the big fishing operation. He was a partner in the Bank of Liberia. All these things he had begun before he became President, but, nonetheless, it helped create the image of a man who-who did... He had some rubber plantations, but there were Liberians who had larger rubber plantations than he had. There are several Liberians, and this is again not to their discredit but just to point out some of the things sometime people are not aware of. The third largest rubber plantation in Liberia was owned by a Liberian, larger than several of the American firms that had plantations there. Firestone had the largest one and this fellow had the second or the third largest. And he did not acquire it by any corrupt means; he simply was an energetic Liberian who kept adding to his ... reinvesting his profits and doing well: the sort of success story that would go down swimmingly here. But it was perhaps at the wrong time and the wrong place.

Q: How would you describe your work in relations with President Tolbert?

CARTER: I think we got on very well together. I think I was lucky in both my relations with President Nyerere and with President Tolbert. They were different kinds of relationships. With President Nyerere it was ... we used to have great exchanges on issues of economics, he being a socialist and my being a capitalist. Always in a very friendly way, but we used to have very full conversations about that. And then we'd talk about southern African issues. We were often not antagonists, but he knew that I had certain limitations because I represented my government, and he also knew some of my personal views. We had very, very stimulating constructive conversations.

Willie Tolbert and I were much more, much more on a hail-fellow-well-met-peer kind of relationship. We were good friends. And when he talked to me about what he was trying to do and sought my advice and counsel, asked my opinion on things which he was facing, I very often tried to present those views in ways which he could use to try to accomplish what he wanted to do. I think that I had something of a partnership relationship with all of the Liberians, government and business, because they felt comfortable with me and we were on the same economic, political wavelength. With Nyerere it was the kind of relationship that you have in a dormitory at night when you're engaging in a good debate (laughs)...

Q: Do you think that it was partly because of the relationship that had existed for so many years between the United States and Liberia?

CARTER: Well, I think that certainly was contributory, but there were ambassadors who did not have that kind of relationship. My immediate predecessor did not have that kind of access. He eventually left because he felt that he did not have the access to the Foreign Ministry that he thought an ambassador should have to be able to present his country's views, and asked to be withdrawn. So I think that there are two things: Yes, countries can have government-to-government relationships, a good relationship, but I think that in the final analysis this either takes off and becomes really effective for the ambassador and the head of government and his ministers get on well. Or in other cases where the chemistry is bad and I could give, if I really had to think about it, a number of illustrations where we'd send people to so-called safe countries and that just didn't work out well because of the relationship. One that immediately comes to mind is one of the countries in the north, North Africa, where our relations had been traditionally just the best. We sent an ambassador who did everything wrong with the head of government, and we finally had to withdraw that ambassador in less than a year. Ambassadorial relations become, for good or bad, often very personal... There're certain things you have to do and there're certain things that embassies have to do. But there's another dimension that an individual can make, and I think that's hard. We have to... we countries have to work hard in picking the right people for the right jobs at the ambassadorial level.

Q: Yes. Could you talk a little about that extra dimension.

CARTER: I think it's this dimension of one, some knowledge of the country and of the players, of how it fits in our own grand scheme of things, being able to understand how to use the positives from their own experience to match up with our own ambitions and goals. Again, in just talking about Liberia and Tanzania, I'm talking about two countries where I wasn't showing up for the first time. When I went to Liberia in '52, I developed relationships with people who were head of the bank, the Central Bank, and ministries. One was a lowly person in the Ministry of Information. When I went back, he was Minister of State. When I went there in 1971, to be a part of the U.S. delegation for the Tubman funeral, I was seeing people I had seen twenty years earlier or almost twenty years earlier who were then - two of them were presidents - were brothers of the next President: Steve Tolbert, who was later killed (in an airplane accident), and Frank Tolbert, who was executed in that group following the coup. So when I showed up in 1976, I didn't have to start off from scratch.

Tanzania, I was there in ... in 1965 the first time. I went back - in '70 or '71 when I had returned from South Africa - and reported to Nyerere on what I had observed when I was in Pretoria and Johannesburg.

And so ... and I guess some of this relates to the inevitable question which arises as to whether black ambassadors in some countries have an advantage or do they have a disadvantage and my view is that an ambassador should have sensitivity and interest in having advantage. And when they're black that doesn't work against them. And when they're white it works for them. It's more a question of sensitivity, esprit de corps, concern. Very often we have some identification with this because of our own reference, our own experience, our own similar reference as we've grown up. We tend to know how it feels to be kicked in the shins (laughs). So we start off with some understanding that some others sometimes ... But there are a hell of a lot of white guys that I know who could do my job just as well or better than I can do, and I know a number of blacks who couldn't do it worth a damn. It's not just a question of race; it's a question of these other things which sometimes we have a leg up on; sometimes we don't.

Q: Did you face any special problems in Liberia?

CARTER: Yes, I think there are two problems I faced in Liberia. One, the Liberians always felt that we did not do as well for them in terms of economic assistance as the French did, for instance, in Cote d'Ivoire, you know. Every time I saw the Foreign Minister and he'd just left Abidjan, he would talk about, "You see what the French did in Abidjan?" (laughs) I said, I said, "Sure, you know how many Frenchmen there are in Abidjan? There are fifty thousand Frenchmen in Abidjan, not in Cote d'Ivoire, but in Abidjan there are fifty thousand Frenchmen." I said, "Now we have four thousand Americans in all of Liberia. If you want fifty thousand Americans here in Monrovia, we can do the same thing. But you don't want that, do you?" And he said, "no." But nonetheless, they always felt that ... First of all, you see, Liberia was never a colony of ours, but they had kind of a colonial attitude or mentality, because all of the countries around them had been colonies. The Brits left an infrastructure in Ghana which if it had been better managed could have kept that country so far out in front. I think there was something, and I don't want to be wrong in this, but I'm just going to take the chance. In 1952 there was something like 6-1/2 miles of paved roads in Liberia and when the British left the Gold Coast, Ghana, there must have been 1,800 miles of paved road, maybe more. Just in terms of the most minimal infrastructure, they developed harbors at Tema and at Accra and Takoradi. There's a developed harbor off Monrovia because it was an important harbor for us during the Second World War. We didn't do it because we thought the Liberians should have just a developed harbor. So that was one problem on the Liberian side.

The other problem on the U.S. side was, again, trying to make the point to my government that we should have been doing more. That there are very real reasons for us to do more. One of our largest Voice of America installations (in the world) is in Liberia. Pan American (Airways) serves Liberia and the airport there is a very critical airport.

Liberia has been an ally before. If we ever had occasion to go to war and they'd still be an ally, we'd want to have good use of their facilities and sea facilities.

I don't think we've done nearly enough for Liberia and one of the reasons we haven't is because they've been more passive than they should have been about this. Governments very often will respond to the country that is giving them more hell than someone else is giving. When I was in Tanzania we ended up having a 65 million dollar economic assistance program. We never spent 65 million dollars in Liberia. Tanzania is larger, need is greater. But in terms of U.S.G. interest, U.S. Government interest, it was very difficult for me having served in both those places to justify spending 65 million dollars in Tanzania where the President's going to be giving you hell at every opportunity (laughs). And Liberia, where we're now I think, back up to 25 million dollars.

Q: I've seemed to focus on the problems you had in these various areas. Are there things you did in Liberia that you feel happiest about?

CARTER: Well, I think on the other side of the coin is that I ... we did get our economic assistance program up higher. I think the Liberians felt when I left that we had moved these relations forward more and they were a bit happier with us. We had arranged a visit ... an exchange of visits of the Presidents, which not many ambassadors are ever able to achieve. We had President Tolbert here on a State Visit during the Bi-Centennial. We had President Carter stop in Monrovia when every country in the world wanted him to visit. Only two African countries got him: Liberia and Nigeria.

We renegotiated what we had. We had to renegotiate landing rights for Pan American Airways that had been dormant for fifteen years. The Liberians were about to abort these agreements, because the Pan Americans, Pan American Airways, was treating itself differently. And that's a very critical landing agreement, because it was a gateway to all the other countries in Africa down the line: Accra, Lagos, Kinshasa, Nairobi. And that would not have been finally negotiated without my being involved on an eleventh-hour basis. So it's natural why I think the greatest disappointment in Liberia was that I was not there during the rice riots and I was not there at the time of the coup. Not sure that I could've changed the coup. I wish that I had an opportunity to go to try to effect some of the changes that many people wanted without the bloodshed that occurred. I don't think anything has ever impacted on me quite as severely as that, because there were so many people who were killed in that change who were not only innocent, should not have died, but who were viable resources that the country will have a long time to try and replace. People like David Neal, who was Minister of Planning and Development. Just one of the great, great personalities of the world. Great planner; man who didn't, who never took a nickel, never involved in any corruption. Cecil Dennis, who was probably the quintessence of the kind of foreign minister that most developing countries need, he was out there kicking us in the pants when we needed to be kicked in the pants, and, sometimes, much to my consternation, but really an honest man. He was trying to do good for his country. Clarence Parker, who had offered a very critical study of the Government, what needed to be done to change it who was killed. Reginald Townsend, who was the first so-called countryman to be brought into the Cabinet who was constantly trying to do good. I could just go on and name ... There are some names that I have not mentioned and I have not mentioned them deliberately, because I certainly don't think that they should have been killed the way they were. But I can understand that their involvement was such that it was not likely that they were going to get much sympathy, but there were some very tragic losses in that change. Tragic to the country. None of us can afford to lose talent like some of the talent that was lost in that. I think some of the leaders of that country now realize that. But it's too late. It's like Thurgood Marshall said the other day: "When you convict a man and find that it's a mistake and you've killed him in capital punishment, you don't have a chance to correct your mistake."

Q: One word about your relationship with the other U.S. ambassadors, black and white.

CARTER: Well, I guess I had come to the place where I was sort of the doyen of the black ambassadors. I have been around now longer than all of those who are in active service, I guess with exception of Terry Todman. Terry must have been, yeah, I guess Terry Todman may have predated me by a couple of months, but I think, because of my service as Deputy Assistant Secretary where I had supervisory responsibility for ambassadors as well as having that period of time as Ambassador to two countries and then and named Ambassador-at-Large, sort of gave me an elder role, which I don't think of myself as being, but, nevertheless, I guess I am.

And with whites, I got along reasonably well with them. They recognized that I'd paid some dues and it was not sort of a token. So, to answer your question, I did not experience any great problems with them. I think most of them were supportive and helpful and one does not always know what other people think. But I certainly didn't ... I don't recall any episode that I could really cite that would be a negative one.

Q: If you had the opportunity to go back to Liberia as Ambassador today, how would you respond to the invitation?

CARTER: Well...I assume you ask that question because ... you guess that there is something to be done, especially there. I don't think that people can generally go back again and be an ambassador in most countries where they've served. It is not a good idea. I suppose if I were asked to go back to Liberia, I would have to think hard and long before saying no simply because, see, I do know that the country is in great need now of help and understanding. And because I have great sympathy and affection for the Liberians, it would be very difficult to say no. That's about it. I just had never thought about it before. But off the top of the head reaction, I would have difficulty saying no, because I know there is a great need and I think I could be helpful. Whether I'd be willing to go back to being an ambassador anywhere again, I'm not sure I can say yes to that. I certainly would have to think long and hard on Liberia. I have a very warm spot in my heart for that country.

Q: There is one other big question I wanted to ask and that is, of the two posts, which did you like best?

CARTER: Uhm...(pause).

Q: And why?

CARTER: I really - I'd have to fudge on that. I ... it's ... there're some mornings that I enjoy pancakes and some mornings I enjoy an omelet, and it doesn't mean I don't like pancakes. Each country presented certain values that were very special and I gained from each one of them, and I enjoyed the people in each of them. I was challenged; I was stretched in each one of the situations. I would have real difficulty in deciding which had been the happier or the more gratifying experience. I think that I was a better ... I think I had learned more about being an ambassador by the time I got to Liberia than I had when I was in Tanzania simply because the longer you do something, if you've got any growth potential at all, the better you do it. That would be about all, that's about all I think I feel about that at the moment.

Q: All right. I'd like to talk a bit about your work as Ambassador-at-Large, but before we move to that, are there other things you'd like to add about Tanzania or Liberia?

CARTER: There's one other subject I think I didn't focus on in talking about Tanzania and that relates to what I've come to develop a keen interest in, and, of course, that's African art. And I guess that that interest began a long time ago but sort of took off when I was in Nigeria and spent a good bit of time in the Benin area where there's a good bit of work done in bronze and terra cotta, and in Ibadan, and then seeing, of course, a number of other things in West Africa - Guinea, Senegal, Mali - and then going to Tanzania and seeing some of the art forms that I had never seen before and recognized that they weren't getting the same kind of attention that West African art was getting.

I think a lot of this comes from my wife's interest in the subject area, and spending time with the sculptors and all the painters. And so we came to know a good bit about the Makonde artists in Tanzania who inhabit that northern region of Mozambique, the southern region of Tanzania and who do really an unusual...who do unusual work in sculpture, and also the primitive painters in the area. And so we decided that it might be useful in our residence there to sort of put in juxtaposition some of the art things we were discovering, as we were resident in that area of the world, with some of the ... with some of the black artists, black American artists. And we had in the residence sort of a little museum, if you please, art exhibit, with a number of black artists. And that was made possible ... some of the works were made possible on loan through what is known as the Embassy and Arts Program in the State Department. And again as happened so often, in terms of our relations with our own government, while the arts and embassy program was very well developed, it was developed around what was known to most of the people in official Washington. And those people who are best known to official Washington were white artists, not black artists (laughs), and so my wife had to give a little course so that these people could go out and even acquire on a loan basis some of the artists we felt we'd like to display in our residence.

We got a collection of, I think, very fine pieces together and the collection was of Tanzanian artists and the showings gained such attention that President Nyerere himself came to view the collection. And I gather that that was the first time he'd been in any ambassador's residence in years and years and years, and this was sort of a coup that my colleagues, the other diplomats, were a little disturbed about. But they hadn't thought of this, or they didn't have a wife who thought about it. And he came and spent a very pleasant evening.

And then Topic Magazine, which is published by what was then the United States Information Agency, now ICA [International Communications Agency], did a full feature on it. And we were always very pleased, because as people came to the residence, and there were a number of people who were constantly in the residence, they were able to see the reality of Afro-American art, Afro being the African art, and American art being our own black artists. That may have been enough by itself to have made the whole 3-1/2 years in Tanzania (laughs) a very valuable experience. It was also just a delight to be able to live in that kind of an artistic milieu and see the things that were on display on the walls and on platforms throughout the house.

There is a follow on to that, and that is, we obviously had to return the American artists' pieces because they were on loan, but we have subsequently given to the Museum of African Art in Washington, a large portion of our collection, which has now become a part of their own permanent collection. And we're pleased because there is not much ... there is nothing much displayed or written about or talked about of the East African artists, and so this has been a small contribution we were able to make toward the understanding of African art in general terms.

Q: And to think how you could have forgotten that!

CARTER: (laughs)...

Q: Ambassador-at-Large. Tell us about it, please.

CARTER: Well, that's I guess a very little known designation. Let me talk about it in general terms. First of all, there are about ... there are usually about five such persons who reach that ... that designation and they are people who usually have had several ambassadorial assignments and this is sort of a graduate level for. ..for them and they perform duties at the discretion of the President and of the Secretary of State. They do not work in, generally speaking, in narrow geographic confines. Sort of thing that Elliot Richardson did in heading the Law of the Sea Treaty; Ellsworth Bunker has done with the Panama Canal and some other things; Sol Linowitz did in the Middle East on trying to bring together the Israelis and the Egyptians. And President Carter and Secretary Vance asked me to come back to work primarily with state governors and with the mayors of the major cities in attempting to make them more a part of the foreign policy processes, and to also extend to ... out from Washington some of our export-import responsibilities. There were five such ambassadors-at-large. In addition to doing whatever these narrow or more narrow designations are, these men are also able to do whatever else may be asked of them by the President and the Secretary of State completely across the board.

The work over the last two years or more was ... in this job has been ... has brought its rewards, because I worked so closely with the President and with the Secretary of State and with governors who had great interest in foreign affairs and trying to make them more savvy about the issues that they have to face. For instance, you may remember Governor Jerry Brown went to Africa. His was not one of the more substantive trips, but, nonetheless, when he goes out as the Governor of the State of California, he's going out representing a state with a population and geography that, if it were evaluated by itself, would be the fifth largest entity in the world. And most countries, when they receive a governor of an American state, think of him as being almost like the President or almost like the Secretary of State, and so we had to brief him on issues which we thought he'd be facing in the countries that he visited.

When Governor Hugh Carey goes out to talk about exporting New York State products, we try to be certain that he speaks with a voice which is not too different from the Department of Commerce, the State Department, or the President, and that they're in tandem. And when Governor Byrne, Brendan Byrne of New Jersey, goes out to Europe, this is all in connection with what we're trying to accomplish.

We also try to keep these governors from being so competitive in offering concessions to foreigners. They want to build factories, they want to get foreign investment in their countries and they therefore offer considerable concessions in tax deferrals and things like this. And we found that some of the states were falling over one another offering concession after concession, so that they were doing themselves a disservice and a disadvantage. And we wanted to be certain that they all were equally informed about what Germany or what Japan or some of the other countries, which at that time had money to invest in our country, were interested in and how far they were willing to go and how far we shouldn't go. So it was a very, a very gratifying experience to work with the governors and with the President and with the Secretary and with the Secretary of Commerce.

Out of that we also built new apparatus in several of our embassies overseas: Brussels, in Bonn, and in Ottawa, in which we now have Foreign Service officers who are there to work with state and local government leaders as they come to these countries, because those are the primary countries, Brussels being the capital of the EEC (European Economic Community) countries. So we can have a better approach to that operation. That's a new function, the state and local government function, and I was pleased to be asked to take it on, because I was chartering new waters and that's always fun and games.

I met with the Secretary twice a week in his senior staff meetings, a proximity which you don't normally get when you're an ambassador in a provincial place. And I worked with Jack Watson almost on a daily basis, who was then, as you know, Secretary of Cabinet and the President's Special Assistant. And I guess I saw President Carter as often as most of his secretaries did at that point in time, and that sort of thing is something you don't always run into in government service. We got to a point when we were getting tired of getting invited to the White House (laughs) ... So that was sort of the crowning assignment. That was the third ambassadorial assignment and the most responsible in terms of overall responsibility and in the pecking order, in the hierarchy, in terms of the highest responsibility.

I guess as a follow on to that question, I should simply, I should not ... I should say why I decided to retire. I am short of the retirement age and, of course, an ambassador can continue his service as long as he is appointed by the President. I am a career Foreign Service officer, and if I were not an ambassador, I could serve until I was sixty-five. I decided to retire because there's not a lot left in the government Foreign Service for me to do now that I really think would be that challenging. I'm certain there could be something, but in the current political context in Washington, if I were going to be asked to serve in the developing world, where I do have most of my area of expertise, I would have some difficulty, because I don't think the incumbent administrators and Administration are singing from the same hymnal that I would be singing from. And this is rather late in my life for me to start doing the sort of teaching that I think I'd have to do that I was willing to do sixteen or seventeen years ago. I don't mean this to be necessarily critical of the incumbents, and I'm not saying this with any political reference. It's just that I think we reach a point in our lives where we're willing to expend energy, but you want to expend it where you think there is the best chance of its being used or useful. I worked with Alexander Haig when he was in the NSC (National Security Council) and I was in the African Bureau. I have a feel about him. I don't know the President at all, but I read what he says and I saw his interview with Walter Cronkite about ... or at least that portion about southern Africa, and I'm not sure we would... I think the President and I would have a lot to do before I'd feel comfortable (laughs) being his spokesman or carrying out his instructions and so on. This attitude is one which I'm sometimes cautioned I should soft-pedal, but it's rather difficult after all this time to soft-pedal basic feelings.

I guess something else that I have not mentioned and I think is reasonably important in all of this is ... and then that is diplomatically, getting outside the U.S. Government, is my work with the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. I serve on the Subcommittee on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in what is known as an expert, an individual expert capacity. There are twenty-six of us who are elected every three years to that panel, and that panel serves as an expert panel to both the Commission on Human Rights and Secretary General on all human rights questions. I was elected for the first three-year term in 1972, and then was re-elected every term, or every election, since then including one just recently held in Geneva in March. The twenty-six members represent geographic regions of the world. My name is advanced by my government, but then election is held by the Commission on Human Rights. And I think I was probably ... I think I've been re-elected maybe despite the fact I'm an American, and this year particularly, despite the fact I am an American, because there was a real anti-American feeling in the Commission on Human Rights this year because of our position on southern African issues and the feeling that we were tilting toward South Africa and looking at the possibility of supporting, or backing away from our support of an independent Namibia. That work has been particularly pleasing to me and I do it about five weeks every year and will be doing it now for another three years. So I have retired from U.S. Government diplomacy, diplomatic service, but I have not retired from the total arena.

Q: It must be very gratifying the work that you're doing.

CARTER: I have not gotten bored at all (laughs). It's been very satisfying, it has.

Q: Fine. It is now about one o'clock.

CARTER: I'm still on West European time, so it's seven o'clock in the evening there (laughter).

Q: today is Friday, May 1, 1981. Ambassador Carter, could we begin this session, please, with your telling us about your early life.

CARTER: Well, I was born in a small Pennsylvania town called Coatesville. Coatesville is about 39 miles west of Philadelphia on the old Philadelphia-Harrisburg-Pittsburgh main railroad line. My father practiced medicine there and went to Coatesville following his graduation from medical school and during a time of one of the great epidemics in the First World War. So I was born February 1, 1921, on Merchant Street, I think, 741 Merchant Street in Coatesville. We lived there, my mother and father and I lived there until 1925, when we moved to Philadelphia.

I guess one of the stories that I associate with Coatesville and with our departure is a story that relates to the KKK [Ku Klux Klan]. One late afternoon, one early evening, I was in the backyard of our house playing and I looked up on a hill that overlooked Coatesville - I suppose it must have been the hillside which was maybe a mile and half, two miles away - and I saw this fire.

I did not really understand what it was all about. But my mother came out and grabbed me up and we went inside, and she was obviously very distressed. I couldn't understand why, because I'd never seen her distressed like that. And she locked the doors, pulled the window shades down and shortly afterwards, my dad came in. And it turns out that this was a cross burning and this was ... Coatesville was one of the remaining centers in Pennsylvania and in the North of the Ku Klux Klan, and it was, I have been told, the last place in the North where a lynching had been held. And after this experience, Dad and Morn decided they would leave Coatesville. So within a matter not of months or weeks but I think days, we moved from Coatesville to Philadelphia, where I grew up.

Coatesville is undistinguished. It's the home of the Lukens Steel Mill and the only thing that I can add to this connection is that there is a section of Coatesville which I used to hear called Haitie. It was the black American version of Haiti and it was, in fact, an all-Negro section of the town, having a black school and a black principal.

Moved to Philadelphia and lived in what was for many, many years, a totally integrated neighborhood. We were the second black family on that block and I went to public schools in Philadelphia. Had, I think, rather a routine and sort of pedestrian growing up. Had grandparents who had a farm which was only about an hour's drive, hour and a half's drive from Philadelphia. Had the happy opportunity of being able to spend a number of weekends and some summers there, so I could combine both the pluses of growing up in a city with the joys which a city kid gets in going out and being able to ride horses, things like that.

My high school was Central High School which was then, and I guess still is, one of the so-called stellar high schools. It was and still is an all-boys high school. I guess I always thought about becoming a physician simply because my father was and my mother was a nurse, and many of our family friends were people from the medical and dental professions. When I say I guess I thought about it, I guess I thought about it simply because everyone talked about it and that was just sort of the way young black kids grew up. They grew up generally aspiring to what their parents were without really giving a lot of thought to it.

By the time I got to college, Lincoln University, I realized that... that I was doing mediocrally well in the science courses and doing rather spectacularly well in what we called at that time the "bunkem" courses: Literature and Sociology and others. So after a year and a half or so, I came home and announced that I thought I was not interested in going to medical school and expected to have a great brouhaha about that with my parents. My mother was disappointed. Being a nurse she felt that physicians were the ultimate end of everything. I guess she really wanted very much for me to be a physician. My dad, on the other hand, seemed, I guess, if not relieved, certainly encouraging, and told me, for the first time, that when he had come along in college and had two choices, one of them to go to Temple University to medical school on scholarship and one to go to Harvard to study English Literature, he opted to go to Temple simply because that was the way he figured he could make a living at that point in time in his life. He didn't see how a person could make a living and raise a family having a degree in English Literature. There were changes obviously from 1912 or '14 to 1943, and while I don't think I had any special insight as to how I was going to make that living, I knew that I was enjoying that area of study: Psychology, Political Science, History, and that I felt more comfortable with it.

I had been encouraged to do a lot of reading in subjective areas and in geopolitical areas and in the field of biography. And I guess I did more reading than a lot of kids, because I was sickly as a youngster and had asthma and I did not have always the energy levels that some of my peers had. I enjoyed reading; I enjoyed books; I enjoyed newspapers; I enjoyed magazines. And newspapers and magazines were particularly important to me. Even now I think I fold the newspaper differently from the way most people do, because I don't like ... I think a newspaper has a life of its own. This attitude about my ... about newspapers undoubtedly has been influenced in later years by my identification with the newspaper industry. But I used to read newspapers, and still do, from stem to stern. I don't spot read. I read almost everything that's in a newspaper, because almost everything that is in a newspaper is interesting to me. Even as sadistic as it may sound, even the obituary pages, because in the obituary you find a tremendous amount of history. And some of the stories that one reads when one reads about a fallen hero, one doesn't get to read until such an occasion arises. I guess I also got that habit from my grandmother, who was illiterate, and one of my first assignments was to. always read two pages for her: page one, which had the main topic of the news, and the obituary pages, to see who was dead that she knew.

After I made the decision about going into ... in not going into medicine, I was continually encouraged by my father particularly. All of his friends thought I was making a great mistake. I continued to pursue the science courses because it was during the Second World War, and that was one way of staying out of the draft (laughs). And I was backstopped on that score.

I had a great, great undergraduate experience at Lincoln. I can talk about that probably for an entire session. And I think that ... let me get back to something I was going to say when I was talking about my reading as a youngster. Several of the things I was reading as a youngster were by people like Carter Woodson and some of the black leaders who used to have a particularly strong influence in our family because of the family interest in what was the Niagara movement and the NAACP. Many of those leaders, when we were still in Coatesville, used to stay at our house, because there was no place for them to stay at hotels in Coatesville. And that continued into Philadelphia.

There was a small movement called the John Brown Movement that was fostered and maintained by a man by the name Dr. J. Max Barber, who was a dentist and a very dear friend of my family. And I can remember also growing up as a youngster going up to Lake Placid every year to pay homage to the memory of John Brown, hearing discussions about his exploits in behalf of the cause (abolition of slavery). One of the books that impressed me during that period of time was a book whose title was Black Majesty, and that was a book about Henry Christophe and Toussaint L'Ouverture who were the great heroes that you recall in the Haitian fight against the French for their own liberation, their own independence, at the turn of the 19th century.

Back at Lincoln I started doing the things people do who are interested in journalism. I wrote for the newspaper there. I eventually became a stringer for a couple of the newspapers in the Philadelphia area: The Inquirer, The Tribune, stringer being a campus correspondent who files sports scores and one or two paragraphs about something that may be happening in the area, and the newspapers buy it on the basis of a square inch, I mean, per square inch - so much per square inch, so much per inch.

Attending Lincoln at that point were a number of students from the countries of Africa, the colonies, actually, and territories in Africa and in the Caribbean who later became very responsible in their own independence movements and in, later, important positions in their governments: men like Francis Kwame Nkrumah, who was in the seminary when I was in the college, who, as you know, became very active in the Pan-African movement and in the movement towards the independence of the Gold Coast and then ultimately of Ghana. Nnamdi Azikiwe had graduated from Lincoln some years earlier but continued to come back to Lincoln often for commencement and to sort of keep in touch. So "Zik" was known to all of us and was very much an influence. Mbadiwe was a Nigerian and later became Minister of Transportation in the first Republic; sort of disappeared from view during the Biafran civil war and then came back and is now back in government in the eastern part of that country; Jones, H.A.B. Jones-Quartey, who is a Ghanaian, and who was a very strong influence on me. He was a class directly ahead of me and was editor of the class yearbook and passed the mantle on to me, not only in terms of being the editor of the yearbook, but also in terms of developing a great interest in his country and in that part of the world, West Africa. Ako Adjei, who was also a Ghanaian and who went back and became a member of the Supreme Court; Fitzjohn, a dentist from Sierra Leone...

I could just name names, and names of people with whom I consorted who were very much an influence in helping me think in more positive terms about what was going to be happening not in the dim distant future but in the days ahead, because we're now talking about the period of 1939 to 1944, 1945. Many of those men went to London where they joined up with others from their countries or areas and then in the case of Gold Coast - Ghana - went back by '48-'49, were jailed and were ultimately freed by 1950. And with their freeing of ... of the Nkrumahs, Botsios and Gbedemahs from jail in the Gold Coast and Accra, the other countries in nearby areas like Guinea and Togo and Dahomey were not far behind. So these men, I think, played a key role in getting me more interested in an area that I might not otherwise have ever gotten enough to know about to be interested in the first place.

Now I've done a lot of talking from your first question and I maybe ought to stop and let you ask some questions about either some portion of this before I continue, or I can just keep on talking.

Q: Keep on talking.

CARTER: (laughs) Well ...

Q: ... and backtrack whenever you feel the need to do so.

CARTER: Okay, okay. Again, to carry on with this African connection, I was doing both PR, public relations, for Lincoln and working for newspapers and in 1951, Nkrumah was invited to New York by then Undersecretary General Ralph Bunche, to be honored as the first of the African leaders who was leading his country to independence. The Gold Coast was not then totally independent. It had control of its internal affairs but not its external affairs. The British controlled defense, foreign affairs, and, I believe, the exchequer, budget. The other portfolios were held by Ghanaians, though the permanent secretaries were almost invariably British until much later in the development of that country.

So, when Kwame came, he was invited by Bunche to do the UN swing here in New York and was invited to Lincoln to receive an honorary degree, and because I knew him, and because I was in the field of media, I was asked to serve as an escort officer. And we had a chance to renew our old friendship and spend some time together during his period of time here in the States in '51.

He was impressed by the press he got and asked if I would be willing to come to Accra to help advise him on setting up, at least initially, an informal information service within - internal information service - which could be expanded to take on external responsibilities as soon as the Gold Coast moved along. And he wanted to be sure that the image he wanted to be projected of this country was in fact that image rather than one that was imposed by the British Information Service.

I could not get away because of my own duties that year, but I agreed to come as soon as I could. So I went the following year, 1952, and spent about six months between Liberia and Gold Coast and Nigeria and French West Africa, primarily what is now Senegal and what is now Cote d'Ivoire, Ivory Coast, making comparisons for my readers, my newspaper readers, which justified my being able to take that much time off, and spending a lot of time with Nkrumah in helping to suggest ways and means that they could set up an information service for themselves.

That was my first trip to Africa and it was a trip that gave me some exposure to the way governments function. I also had a chance to see what the United States Government was doing in that part of the world. We did not have an embassy in the Gold Coast at that time. I use Gold Coast and Ghana interchangeably. By right (inaudible) I shouldn't do that. Gold Coast was the former name; it became Ghana at the time of independence later. But in Gold Coast we had a consulate, which is what you have when you have a legation or official mission short of an embassy where the country has not yet become independent.

And I saw people who were serving in our consulate who were not particularly either happy about serving there or of being well versed in what was going on in the country, really being interested in the political dynamics. And I remember one black officer who was with our Information Service, fellow by the name of Sawyer who subsequently has died. But he was about the only one in the whole official American family who knew what the hell was going on in the Gold Coast, and he and I spent a lot of time talking. And I tried to get to talk with the Consul General. He wasn't interested in talking to me. He didn't think I had anything necessarily to say. But in point of fact, I was seeing the leader of government business and then, ultimately, the Prime Minister. Almost every day I was his guest. And the Consul General saw him when he arrived and presented credentials, and that was about the last time.

That gave me a real interest in government service, though I did not think that I would be apt to be involved in it, or ... I didn't think of myself as being involved in it. I was just sort of being a critic of it from afar.

But I went back to West Africa every two years to sort of update myself and update readers as to what was going on in that emerging part of the world. That was '52, '54, '56, and '58.

I say very often when I talk about Africa that when I went to Accra and to Monrovia in 1952, there were only five of the countries on that continent that were independent. That seems incredible when one now sees that there are 53 countries on that continent that are independent. And it seems all the more incredible to me because it's all happened not only in my lifetime, but in my adult lifetime, a period of time that I have been something of an observer.

That gave me a geographic specialty, so that when Carl Rowan began to talk to me about coming into the Foreign Service, I was responding because I had this interest in Africa particularly. And I think he recognized that there was this resource and wanted to see it utilized for the benefit of the American Government. And I saw it as an opportunity to be able to try to change some attitudes and do some things which I had observed disapprovingly for many years.

Q: You know, by any standards you've had an extraordinary career. Last night you were honored as a journalist, and to attain the highest position as an ambassador-at-large, all those things were terribly ... It would take a great deal to understand what experiences make a man fit for the role of an ambassador. And I wonder if you could talk a little about what you see as the influences in your life, your early influences, training, what combination of experiences have brought you where you are today.

CARTER: Well, I think there's certainly ... my wife would be interested in hearing me say this. I think there's certainly been an element of luck. Being at the right place at the right time is very important in all of this. I was and still am very curious about people. I have an interest in people. And I think that if one is going to succeed in any people-related business, he's got to obviously be a sincerely motivated person so far as interest in people. I think I am sensitive. I think that's an important quality. I'm not sure if it's a learned quality. I think you have it or you don't have it. But insofar as what one does to prepare oneself, I think if one is general enough in his interests and not parochial, he or she has a good base from which to begin in this field. Because the practice of diplomacy requires, at the level I've been happily able to reach, a breadth that you can't get if you just stay in a narrow niche like in consular affairs alone or in administrative affairs alone, or in political affairs alone.

One of the reasons I think that I've done a good job as ambassador is because I've had some good management skills which I got when I was a publisher of the then largest black publication in America, The Pittsburgh Courier, the newspaper. I learned how to get along with people. I had to negotiate eight different labor contracts every year with the labor unions. I had to meet a payroll of about \$25,000 a week, which was a lot of money at that point in time. So when I got around to managing a mission like the mission we have in Monrovia, which is the largest one in Africa, it was not difficult, because it was more of what I'd done before and really not quite that large, and so it was very easy to do. I enjoyed managing.

Again, I think there are some skills that you have to have. A basic capability of being able to listen and profit from and remember. I learned to write, because writing skills were required at my high school. My father was a good writer and was always critical of my writing output. Did a lot of encouraging about reading, I think as I mentioned.

In college we learned to speak at a men's school where there had been these great orators like Nnamdi Azikiwe, Kwame Nkrumah, Franklin Williams and Thurgood Marshall. If you could not express yourself, you died (laughs)! You know, you had these bull sessions that were, in fact, full-fledged debating sessions. Our Delta Rho Forensic Society was as important to be a part of as the basketball team was. Lincoln, then, exacted a certain requirement of each in terms of intellectual growth, which I think was sort of peculiar to that school at that time. And I, by some manner, kept up. It was a great preparation for later on.

I don't think, as I understand the word ambition, that I have been an ambitious person except that I've always wanted to do well what I was doing, and maybe that's the same thing. I also have enjoyed myself as I've gone along. I've had a thoroughly good time in my life. If I had someone ask me what portions I would do differently, I would have a hard time to say that I would change any of it. That does not mean I am self-satisfied. It simply means I've enjoyed what I've done and I've been successful enough at it so that I've had some of the rewards that go along with it. Each job, each opportunity has been a challenge; it's been very special; it's been different but yet had been built on something that I've just finished doing.

Some people have asked what's the difference being a Foreign Service officer and being a newspaperman. I said very simplistically the difference is I'm writing for a smaller audience but a more selective one, a more critical one (laughs), because you've got to write in this business. You've got to do interpretive reports of the country where you serve or the circumstances which you're evaluating, and you've got to get the attention of people who are reading a lot of other things.

I don't know, again, if I've answered your question with any precision, but I guess I'm talking about a person that is all complete as possible.

Q: You've answered it way above average, sir; you're not superhuman but almost (laughter). If you were speaking to a group of young people who had expressed an interest in Foreign Service, what kind of advice would you give to them?

CARTER: Read everything they can get their hands on. Do as much traveling throughout the world as they can. One thing that I didn't mention in the course of some of this. In the early days when I was in high school, I shipped in the summers on Colonial and Eastern Steamship Lines from New York to Boston, Boston to Yarmouth and Halifax, Nova Scotia. It was a summer job. It didn't pay much, but the experience of just traveling by sea from New York to Boston, Boston to Nova Scotia was an exciting thing for a kid who is fourteen or fifteen. And then when I was in college, for a summer or two, I shipped on tankers between Girard Point, Philadelphia and Puerto la Cruz and Aruba, near Venezuela. I learned a long time ago that there are other kinds of people other than Philadelphians. For a long time I thought the greatest excursion was to go from west Philadelphia to south Philadelphia (laughs). I found out that there are some other places left, and there were. And I still say to kids that you don't have to be born into wealth to travel.

There're many ways you can find to see something that's somewhat different, even if you're staying at home, getting to know someone who lives across town rather than just on the other side of the street where you grew up. Learning a foreign language, a second language is absolutely required from now on. I don't think we can ever live in a mono-language situation anymore, even in our own country. Our absorption of such large numbers of refugees of all persuasions requires that if we're going to communicate successfully we've got to have a second, third language. This is very new for Americans; we don't have that custom. When you grow up in Africa or in the Caribbean or in ... or particularly in Europe, you just drive one hundred miles and you've got to speak something else to be understood. It's very clear that in America you can drive not only one hundred miles but a thousand miles, three thousand miles and speak the same language and get by. So we have a tendency to think of languages as being boresome requirements that you have to do to satisfy the two years or whatever to get your high school credits or your college credits. Reading and traveling and looking beyond one's self would be something I would talk to ... I'd say to young people as being very important.

Q: Ambassador Carter, could we talk more about Lincoln, if you please (laughter)?

CARTER: Yes. (laughs) I guess one of the things I didn't say about Lincoln, too, was, having graduated from a very, very strong academic high school, I went to Lincoln with the notion that it was going to be a cake walk, a cup of tea. After all, most of the students who were going there were coming from very, very small high schools, from places not necessarily like New York City or Boston or Philadelphia but from Virginia and the Carolinas. And so in the first semester I was there, I was just having a ball. It was the first time I'd been away from home and I was caught up with the idea that you could drive to West Chester and see girls at West Chester State Teachers College, or to Cheyney or to Baltimore and go to Morgan and go to Howard, and the girls were always nice there and received us with open arms; get up to New York for a weekend. And at the end of my first semester, I just about flunked out. I was, I think, (reported) to be short of flunking out and I realized that while I was doing all this gallivanting with the Cromwell Douglasses and Bill Lightfoots, a lot of others of my classmates were burning the midnight oil, because they were frightened to death of being away (from home) and going to college.

Well, there are a lot of other bits and pieces of the Lincoln experience, but I guess another thing that may have had an influence was that when I was about to be graduated, two of my classmates - two of my roommates - we had three of us in a room - decided to have a really big weekend. It was a weekend when ... when ... called "The Glee Club Prom Weekend". You invited your best girlfriend out and it was a formal and there were a number of events in connection with it. It was a men's school, a Presbyterian-affiliated men's school, and the leadership was very severe about how ladies were to be treated and their access to your rooms and so forth, and so they had to be registered in on campus. The dean had to know where all the ladies were staying, and certain faculty homes were open for them and so forth.

But we three "big niggers on campus", we would subvert the process (laughs) and in the course of it all, we got caught and my graduation was deferred. I was not able to walk with my class as a consequence of that. Our graduations were deferred. And I think that even though that seems innocent enough by today's standards of co-educational dormitories, it was a cataclysmic thing to have to tell your parents at that point in time, forty years ago.

After leaving Lincoln and going to work full time for The Philadelphia Tribune, I was, like most reporters, assigned to City Hall and did a lot of court coverage. And one of the very large trials at that time in Philadelphia history was a murder trial of a white woman by a black maid, whose name was Corinne Sykes, and I just remember the name just like that and I haven't ... I don't think I've spoken her name in thirty years. But Corinne Sykes was defended by Raymond Pace Alexander, who was one of the very outstanding black lawyers at that time. And I was fascinated by this court case and decided that it might be a good thing to go to law school. And so I applied to Temple and got admitted the next September and started going to law school at night. I think because I had something of a fascination by what I was seeing in the courtrooms as a reporter, not a court reporter, but as a reporter who covered the court; and because I thought that it might be a good discipline for me.

But at that time I was married, just starting a new family, had then become city editor by that time of The Tribune, and going to law school from five at night to ten at night, having to study until the library closed at 12:30 was more than I could keep up with. So that was a year that I enjoyed and profited from but just ran out of gas in terms of energy and gave up trying to be able to keep up. That would have been '47, the year of '47-'48.

Then I had occasion to have a client, PR client, public relations client, which was headquartered here in New York in '50-'51 and I decided ... I was looking in The New York Times one Sunday and saw an advert that the New School was running a master's program in Sociology and, again, with an interest in people, I decided I would see if I could at the end of the day do two nights a week work on a master's degree in Sociology at the New School, and finished that year and enjoyed the experience at the New School. It was very avant-garde, as you may remember. You would not remember; this was much before your time. But among people my age, they remember the New School as being a kind of center of liberal thought and a great deal of exciting things were going on. I enjoyed as much of that and the ambience as I did the actual work that I was pursuing.

I guess I should point out that my being in New York for that period of time, several days a week, was part of my work in public relations. Every, not every, but a lot of newspapermen were moonlighting as PR people while they were making subsistence wages at the newspapers that they worked for. I organized, along with two of my colleagues, Leon Snead and George Lyle, a public relations firm called Journalists Associates. We organized that firm and it began its work in January of 1948. Among the clients we represented were the United Negro College Fund, which was headquartered here in New York, and Maryland State College, which was then Princess Anne. It's now changed its name to the University of Maryland, I think, the Princess Anne Division. Mercy Douglas Hospital, William Penn Business Institute; Valley Forge Foundation, which was a foundation that was interested in broadening the understanding of civil defense measures. America was experiencing the watch-over-every-shoulder phenomenon enunciated (inaudible) by Senator McCarthy at that point in time. Civil defense was high in American consciousness. Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. Valley Forge Foundation, which was headquartered in New York, was a subsidiary foundation of Freedoms Foundation in Valley Forge. And the honorary chairman of Freedoms Foundation was General Dwight Eisenhower, who'd come back to be president of Columbia University and who later, in 1952, went on to do some other things that the American public will remember. One of my best friends that I have maintained through that period ... from that period until now is Joseph Eley, who is now a vice president of Squibb Corporation. Joe and I used to solve the problems of the world that existed in 1950, 1951.

One of the things that I had skipped over in the course of all this rambling has been my brief political excursion ... I'd always had an interest in politics. I was a committeeman in my ward in West Philadelphia, and while I was a newspaperman, I was doing all these other things. And the ward committee chairman, a man by the name of Harry Battis was not a particularly lettered person, and Philadelphia politics was not producing the finest group of lettered people in the world. Philadelphia politics then was very much like Boston politics; it was machine politics. And Harry Battis used to lean on me for a lot of the things that he found difficult to fathom.

And in 1954, we decided it might be a good thing for him to have a candidate from his ward to contest for a seat in the Congress from the Fourth Congressional District, which embraced one ward in West Philadelphia where I lived, the 24th, and six wards ... five wards in North Philadelphia and one in Germantown. What's that, seven wards all together? Yes, I think. The committeemen, the committee chairmen from the seven wards get together and slate the Congressional candidate. We're now talking about Republican wards, the Republican chairmen. And Harry Battis, who was my chairman, was black; Hopson Reynolds, who was chairman of one of the North Philadelphia wards was black; and the others were white. And in the primary the chairmen agreed, the ward chairmen agreed, on slating again the incumbent who had lost, not the incumbent, but the person who had run the last time, 1952, when Eisenhower won big, and he lost.

And in 1954, they decided to slate him again and Harry Battis and Hopson Reynolds, the two black chairmen, decided they would run me to see if we could break through. There were no black congressmen from Philadelphia at that point in time. As a matter of fact, the only black congressmen at that time were from New York and Chicago. And I ran against the organization candidate and we won in that primary. And then I lost in the general election that fall against a man who's now a member of the Philadelphia Common Pleas bench, Earl Chudoff.

One of the interesting things which relates to that campaign, I just noted this week in the newspapers, when I saw that John Roosevelt, who was the youngest son of the former President, had died. John Roosevelt was always sort of a maverick. Elliot Roosevelt was the real maverick but John was what was a political maverick. He was a Republican a long time ago. And John Roosevelt came into Philadelphia and helped to campaign on my behalf and Adam Clayton Powell came down from New York and campaigned for me. And he campaigned for me primarily because my mother was a member of Marshall Shepard's church. Marshall Shepard was a big, literally a big black Baptist preacher who had one of the largest Baptist churches in Philadelphia and who was Recorder of Deeds at one time in Washington, DC, and my mother was a staunch member of his church. And when she let it be known that I was ... he was a Democrat, when she let it be known I was running, he said that he would support me and he would get some additional support for me.

So Adam came down from New York and that was a great experience. And it was going so well that the Democrats had to enlist Bill Dawson from Chicago to come and speak for Earl Chudoff, the candidate who was my opponent. And one of the things that we remember about that campaign was that when Bill Dawson arrived on the ... on the train, a number of people - I didn't have anything to do with this - I knew about it - but a number of people, a number of blacks, met that train at the 30th Street Station, all of them wearing handkerchiefs on their heads to ... (laughs) ... remind Bill Dawson he was coming to campaign against a "brother." But in any event, that was my aborted effort at national politics. It was a lot of fun. Cost some money, but I gained some experience from it.

Q: Do you suppose you would have stayed in politics had you won?

CARTER: I expect that politics, particularly when you become a Congressman, is such a ... you become so smitten and so quickly involved, it may be difficult to ... it may have been difficult to leave. I don't know. The best way to get a Congressman out of his seat is to defeat him and then he goes on and does something else (laughs).

Q: Ambassador Carter, how do you spend your leisure time?

CARTER: (laughs) Well, that which I can describe on tape is one thing (laughs). I'll teach you to ask that kind of a question (laughter). Do you have any suggestions? Ah ... as a matter of fact, I enjoy my leisure. I think I said earlier in this taping that I've had fun as I've gone along, and I have had fun. I ... and I guess I'm as ... as perfectionist in the things I do leisure time wise as I am when I'm in pursuit of things professionally or vocationally. I play tennis; I enjoy it. But my real love is golf, and I came to be a golf devotee because I ran out of tennis partners. When you're in college, everyone around your age plays ... is more active and so you have no problems in getting a partner and getting a game going. But as you get older, as one gets older, at least it used to be that way, tennis has come back now in kind of a new light and people are playing it at much older ages than I am even.

But having run out of tennis partners, I one day called one of my last tennis partners, Woodson Hopewell from Philadelphia and Woody was not available. But he said, "Why don't you come out and play some golf today and walk around with us?" And I walked around with them and found that trying to stroke that little white ball into that small cup was a challenge and I began taking the game up. And I play golf now literally all over the world. Wherever I've been I've played: in Puerto Rico, and Mexico, and Singapore, and Japan, in Africa and all the countries where I've served.

In Kenya I lived across the street from the golf club, one of two golf clubs that I was a member of. And in Nigeria my backyard fronted on to the second tee of the golf course and so it was very accessible to me. And one of my best friends in Nigeria, a chap who was very important at that time, still is, he was then Minister of Information, Tony Enahoro, who was a very good golfer and we played together often. Michael Olujiogbo, who was director of television, was also a keen golfer. So we had a good group of people that I could fraternize with and enjoy personally and also enjoy professionally. I continue to play golf and I suppose spend an inordinate amount of my leisure time on the golf course.

I also have an interest in bridge. The bridge interest is kind of a funny story. My parents were excellent bridge players and as again happened so often, because they played so well and played so much, I was sort of turned off by it. And they would always try to encourage me to learn, and I would always have some excuse. But during a lull in the exam period at Lincoln once, we started playing whist just to sort of while away time. And then someone, Joel Smith, I think, introduced bid whist. We started playing bid whist and somebody said, "Well, if you're playing bid whist, you may as well be playing bridge". We said, "No, it's too complicated." And someone said, "No, it's not complicated; it's like this..."

And, literally, in an examination period, we started from whist to bid whist to playing bridge. And a group of us at school played enough so that one weekend when I came home three or four months later, my folks were having a bridge session and someone didn't show or was late, and I volunteered to sit in and hold the hand. My parents couldn't believe what they heard. And I said, "Well, I don't play well; I'll just sit down and hold the hand." And it turns out that I got several good hands and didn't bungle them too badly and then they began to show me some of the very fine points of the game.

They were both life masters. And I began to play well enough to, again, get some national points. And my cousin, Jack Chisum, whom I've also not mentioned but who is clearly, I guess, the one fellow who has been closest to me from the time we were both about six or seven years old, and we still are very, very close; we are as brothers. Our mothers were in nurse training together at Douglass Hospital and they were very, very close. They were as sisters. And Jack and I grew up calling each other cousin, but being very, very close to one another. I think of him as a brother, and I love him as a human being.

So Jack and I started playing bridge in some of the local tournaments and scoring very well. But when I went off to Pittsburgh in '55 to begin to run the Courier, that broke up our ... Jack was practicing medicine in Philadelphia and so we didn't get to play as often. I played from time to time. One of my last bridge sessions with my ... both my mother and father occurred one weekend when Mom came out in advance of Dad to play in a regional tournament in Pittsburgh. She had always tried to teach me something about cooking, because she said I would need to know how to cook; she would one day, not always be alive, and that my wife might not be a fairly good cook. So I should know how to feed myself if necessary.

I never told her either about having learned how to cook when I was out in Pittsburgh. And so she got into town on Wednesday, I think, several days before the tournament, and I surprised her by fixing dinner that night. It was great fun for both of us. And then she and I played in a mixed pairing that Saturday, and then she and Dad played, I think, that night in a session, and then Dad and I played in an open pairing or a men's pairing on Sunday. They got on the train, went back to Philadelphia that Sunday night and I never saw my mother alive again. She died the following Friday morning. She didn't wake up, but we had a very, very special four days together before that ... before that event.

I am told that Mom, in the course of the two weeks before her death, went around to visit each element of her family which she had not seen for sometimes months, sometimes years, including relatives from Virginia. We don't know if this was coincidental or whether people sometimes get a feeling that something is going to happen and they want to sort of touch base, but in any event, she did that.

Her demise was really not unlike even my father's. He married again and then his second wife died, preceding his death by, what was it, six months or a year? But Dad ended up by flying back to Monrovia with me on New Year's Eve of '77 ... '77, '78. And we had a great trip out together, celebrating two New Year's Eves because of the time change, and then three weeks together in Liberia in which we talked about everything back to when I was about age two. Then he got sick on a Wednesday night and expired on the following Monday morning.

Q: In Liberia?

CARTER: In Liberia. It was a part of ... I think a very special attachment that I have for that country. Well! The rest of my family I have are a half-brother. The Africans describe brothers and sisters not as half, which I think is a good way to handle it, but they would say, same Ma, different Pa, different Ma, same Pa, different Ma.

George and I had the same mother. He was nine years my elder and because he is nine years my elder, we were not always ... we did not grow up together. We were not always together, but we've always had a very kind of special relationship. A good one I think; one which has been distanced by the nine years. But George has always sort of looked up to me, because he thinks I've done well. And I think, on the other hand, he's had a very satisfying, very gratifying life by his own standards.

My grandparents on my mother's side I knew well and they were very influential. My grandfather was a dirt farmer, raised cows, was a taciturn man, stern disciplinarian. Was alleged to carry a gun to shoot anyone who spoke to him before breakfast (laughs). I think that's apocryphal, but, nonetheless, that's the story about him. I did not know my father's parents nor did he know his mother. He knew his father; he died when Dad was about nine.

We are a small family. I have one son; I have a stepdaughter and a stepson and I have one grandson. We Carters don't seem to be very prolific. So I was married in 1947, first time ... 1946, and that wife still lives. She lives in Philadelphia. We were separated I guess most of the twenty-odd years that we were married. I've been married this time almost ten years, and I don't plan on being married anymore.

Q: Where did you meet your present wife?

CARTER: From the person who talked me into coming to the Foreign Service. He arranged that we would meet one another because she was a widow and I was living alone, at least most of the time, in a big house that he had sold me, and he felt we ought to know one another. Carl Rowan and his wife, Vivian and Aubrey Robinson and his wife knew Carlyn very well. I did not know Robby that well. I had known him ... you know, I don't know if I've ever talked about this, but I knew Robby when he was at the Congregational Church and I had spoken to him several times. They tried to get us together a couple of times, but it didn't materialize simply because I don't think ... we weren't looking for a fellow and a girl. We were pretty adult (laughs) and the idea of a blind date was not necessarily attractive. The night that we met one another we had a certain skepticism, but it didn't last very long.

Q: Did you ever play poker?

CARTER: Oh! (laughs) You see how easy it is to get sidetracked? (laughs). Did I ever play poker? I invented the game (laughs). Well, let me see where I really began to play poker. Ah ... it sounds like, I don't know, I don't know when I began to play poker. All I know is that I played poker for most of my adult life, and I adore the game as I used to adore bridge. And I guess I still adore bridge; I just don't play enough to feel comfortable with it. Bridge is a very dynamic game. The science of bridge is ever changing, ever developing. I don't even know half of what two versions of the new systems that are being used. I know basic point count and Goren and things like that. But poker does not change like that. Poker is a straightforward game. Once you learn how to play draw poker or even stud or whatever game you play, there are no further refinements. You just learn it and know what the betting odds are.

And so I used to play a lot of poker when I was in Pittsburgh with the Courier. As a matter of fact, I began gambling when I was in college. That's really when I began gambling, and I don't know whether I have told this story so much that I believe it now myself or whether it's fact. But I think that the only time ... I think that I only lost twice in four years at that college in gambling, primarily shooting craps in college. And of course one of the reasons why I didn't lose many times was because I ran the games in my room (laughs) ... and when you're the houseman, you don't lose if you've got any sense at all (laughs) ... and so I made money. I always had money in my pocket when I was in college. I had a car and I would take guys places and charge them 35¢ ½ or a dollar and a quarter, or take trunks back and forth to the station, and I ran the crap games. So I had that gambling experience as a background, and then I just began to layer it on by doing other things like adding poker.

We had a particularly good group in Pittsburgh. At every one of the posts I went to there was always what was called a poker school. That's a British name for poker group. They called ... British, they called it poker school. We had a good group in Kenya, including the Ambassador and the AID Administrator and some of the people from the business community. I always won. Went to Nigeria and I would say I won eight or nine times out of ten. We had a very good group of players. We had so many players that people were on the waiting list to get into our games. And then we started a second game. They came up in the minor leagues waiting to get up to the big leagues.

And we played poker in Washington. I guess in Washington I played even less well, or with much better players, or I couldn't afford to keep up with the kinds of stakes that they were playing, because I think that that group, which includes, again, Carl Rowan and some other really big rollers, was a little out of my class. They were above me. And I lost more there than I won, which was a place where I shouldn't have been playing, because you couldn't afford to lose with the kind of stakes they were playing for.

Went back out to Tanzania and had a group there and pretty consistently won. The AID Director and I divided up almost...

MRS. CARTER: Give the name of it.

CARTER: (laughs) Oh, yes. Again, because ambassadors have to have published schedules as to what they do in the course of the day, for the circulation of the staff, we had what we called an Economic Study Group (laughter) that met every Thursday night. For a long time my secretary didn't even know what that meant. She said that she was so impressed by how I was trying to advance myself with this Economic Study Group (laughter). So all the ambassadors' daily schedule said they were going to see this person and that person and then the Economic Study Group (laughs). That group gave me a certificate when we left, which is somewhere in my archives of mementos. All the fellows signed it and thanked me for all the contributions I had made while I was there to our joint learning in this experience there.

And then we played in Monrovia. But the Monrovia games were not strong games. They were not even consistent. In other words, not even good games. Because, again, these games followed players. A certain group of people are at the place at the right time and you get great action and if ... if they're not ... if only two or three are there, then you have a hard core and some others who come along, but it's not quite the same thing.

I'm playing tennis again now because more people are playing and because I can get some tennis in a shorter time than it takes to play golf. But my love is still golf. And I do a lot of ... I'm a music buff and I have done a lot of taping, particularly in the last three or four years, trying to get some of the things that I like available, readily available, so that when I travel around, I have music that I can enjoy wherever I am. That, Mrs. Lincoln, is the story of my last night (laughs).

Q: It's been a great pleasure hearing you talk about your life.

CARTER: ...(laughs)...

Q: ...and thank you very much, Ambassador Carter.

CARTER: And thank you, Celestine. I've enjoyed sharing the ... you both have made me think of things that could so easily go down the drain and be lost.

My son is kind of an in-house family archivist and he has some things. He doesn't have anything quite like this, because we've never sat down in one session and tried to do this thing. But I know he will also enjoy one of these days when he'll read the transcripts ... but he has gotten a good deal of information together about my father and mother's side of the family and his mother's side of the family. And we are ... I guess he is the seventh generation Carter. So he's had some fun digging back and getting bits and pieces. He hasn't been turned off ... turned away so far. I expect if it goes back another generation, he may be (laughs)...

Q: I'm sure not...

End of interview